

during the different historical periods mentioned in the Egyptian texts and the actual artefacts found in the excavations.

An extensive bibliographical list and indices follow. The work would have benefited from the inclusion of studies from recent years, since the submission of the dissertation. A list of illustrations and high-resolution photos of the finds (unfortunately not all objects are depicted) conclude the volume.

The volume is available online at: <https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/191319/>. In sum, this is a wonderful volume, with abundant information. It will be a valuable reference book for scholars dealing with Egypt and the northern Levant for years to come.

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BLEDA S. DÜRING:

*The Imperialisation of Assyria: An Archaeological Approach.*

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The Neo-Assyrian Empire (c. 911–609 BCE) has been a key focus for many scholars interested in empires and Mesopotamia. The origin of this empire is arguably found in the fourteenth century when the Assyrians shook off the yoke of Mitanni to establish the Middle Assyrian state. For a region as volatile as ancient Mesopotamia, the Middle and Neo-Assyrians proved to create among the longest-lasting states, one which evolved and adapted to reach its peak in the seventh century BCE before rapidly collapsing. This book explores the origin of that story, how the Assyrians transformed their small state into a powerful force, one that shaped not only Near Eastern history but subsequent large, Eurasian empires such as the Achaemenids and Hellenistic empires. Düring presents an important focus on the late second millennium BCE development that led to the rise of the Neo-Assyrian empire, incorporating the geography, social fabric, and historical developments that affected this evolution.

The key question the book addresses is understanding the success of the Middle Assyrian Empire that connected to the Neo-Assyrian Empire. After the introduction and definition of empires, the focus turns to the preceding periods, characterized by short periods of empires and states, from the Uruk to the Mitanni period. In chapter 2, the importance and history of the city of Ashur is explored. Chapter 3 begins the main focus of the volume, with a discussion of how the Middle Assyrian state arose, with a focus on the archaeological data at Ashur and its region. Chapter 4 looks at the growing state, evidenced by settlement patterns near the Assyrian heartland and archaeological data from Syria. Chapter 5 effectively looks at the governance and political agency of the empire, where the imperial culture that emerges is presented as a key transformation that helped to create relationships between subjects and rulers and socio-cultural practices. Chapter 6 looks at the later periods, including the decline of the Assyrian Empire (1050–935 BCE) and its re-emergence after this period, including archaeological and historical evidence for its practices. The conclusion focuses on integrating the data to assess why the

Assyrian state demonstrated such success from 1350–612 BCE. The Assyrians are presented as having been reluctant at first to create the imperial practices they are well known for. Assyrian success in getting people it ruled to be part of the imperial project, “a successful participatory system” as Düring states, was key to the empire’s success. This participation, through incentives or even co-option, allowed the endurance of a state, rarely seen in a region that had often been highly fragmented, while the practices begun by the Assyrians were adopted by the later large Eurasian empires.

This focus on the Middle Assyrian period, and then connecting it to the key changes and policies of the Neo-Assyrian state, is not only sensible but also allows the work to demonstrate the long process in which the Assyrian state changed as it encountered, dealt with, and determined policies that would be effective. I enjoyed seeing the connections made between material culture, settlement archaeology, and imperial practice. The arguments about imperial practices learned over centuries and applied from the Middle Assyrian experiences in the Neo-Assyrian period, including in agriculture, monumental building, and transformations in its provinces, are well made. The focus on agency by different populations and the Assyrians is key to showing the evolutionary process of imperialization. There are other key transformations, which I have attempted to examine in my own work, that help explain this process, although they are not integrated into the work under review (M. Altaweel and A. Squitieri, *Revolutionizing a World: From Small States to Universalism in the Pre-Islamic Near East*, London: UCL Press, 2018). Nevertheless, the main weakness in this work is that the theoretical contributions are not well developed and are too limited in scope. At the core of Assyria, we see, in agreement with the author, a process through which the state was transformed as it encountered different populations, political circumstances, and dealt with its environmental limitations. However, theories such as complexity, structuration, and others, could be engaged with from the perspective of social sciences to explain this process (see J.G. Manning, *Open Sea: The Economic Life of the Ancient Mediterranean World from the Iron Age to the Rise of Rome*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020; Z. Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press). I think, within Mesopotamian archaeology, we may need to engage better with the wider literature that has utilized cases from Mesopotamia in particular to make arguments about empires and states more broadly (P. Turchin, “A theory for formation of large empires”, *Journal of Global History* 4, 2009, 191–217, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S174002280900312X>). To do that, we need also to generalize, to some level at least, the theoretical underpinnings that shape states and empires. Many great contributions, including this work, are undermining their influence on wider studies, and by extension their impact, by not engaging with the literature that has a much broader audience interested in empire studies and history. While this work makes very useful contributions, I did find it a struggle to see how an expert could generalize this work to compare to other states and empires. Perhaps more formal discussion on this, in a further chapter, could have helped. Overall, archaeologists and historians interested in Mesopotamian archaeology and history will find this volume very useful.

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